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BEING PARENTS OF TEENAGE CHILDREN IN THE CITY. INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION AS “EDUCATIONAL STYLE” OF INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP

ABSTRACT

Starting from a research project centred on “second generation” parents, the present contribution intends to explore the intercultural mediation concept taking the perspective of immigrant parents with teenage children. Specifically, the pedagogical attention was drawn to the “educational strategies of intercultural mediation” (enacted by parents of non-Italian origin with adolescent children) and to the processes of interaction and participation between parents (both native and non-native). It is claimed that such “points” can indicate possible paths, both of reflection and action, useful to promote real processes of human inclusion, of mutual integration and of citizenship, leveraging parents (autochthonous et non) that live in the city.

KEYWORDS

Intercultural mediation; educational style; parenting; intercultural integration

INTRODUCTION¹

For effectively comprehend the current migratory processes and the modalities of insertion and integration of the migrants in the host territories, it is indispensable to shift the attention from the individual subject to the “family subject” (Donati, 2014; Regalia & Giuliani, 2014, pp. 153-179). The latter is the primary system of relationships within which the entire migratory process takes place both in the country of origin, in the country of destination and in family ties which are preserved at distance between the

¹ This contribution makes extensive reference to what was developed in Cestaro (2017), although integrating it with new aspects.

people involved. In this perspective, bringing the family back to the centre of the entire migratory project invites us to consider migration itself as "a family event" (Donati, 2014; Regalia, Scabini & Rossi, 2008).

It is however necessary to consider migration through the lens of plurality when we conceive *family* as a subject of the migrating process. Actually, the composition and the degree of internal complexity make migrant families like "social structures with variable geometry" (Ambrosini, Bonizzoni & Caneva, 2010, p. 40). This variability depends not only on the stories of the subjects involved, but also on the type and the outcome of family reunification which, when unsuccessful, can lead to separations and new marriages. Overall, migrant families can be described as "composite and multi-faceted reality" under a psychosocial point of view (Regalia & Giuliani, 2014, p. 176). In fact, depending on the case, they present elements of undeniable fragility and vulnerability but also important resources through which to ensure, over time, family unity, care for children, as well as positive practices of interaction in the territory.

Being in an intermediate position between the individual and the "new" community, migrant families constitute a "crucial junction point" (Ambrosini, 2012, p. 29) of the relationship between safeguarding cultural differences and starting a constructive *integration* process in the territory. They represent indeed a "sphere in which cultural affiliations are constantly renegotiated" in relation both to the "outside" of family (the social context) and to the "inside" of family relationships (Ambrosini & Bonizzoni, 2012, p. 223).

With specific reference to the relationships within the family context, recent studies conducted in Italy on the "second generations" address the important role of mediation exercised by parents in the process of building children's identity (Ambrosini & Molina, 2004; Regalia & Giuliani, 2014, pp. 153-157; Ricucci, 2001). They reveal how the "educational styles" of parents represent a "ballast and/or an opportunity" (Pozzi, 2012, pp. 181-218) for the integration of the whole family group. As a consequence, these researches highlight the need to promote supporting and accompanying actions towards the reconstituted family. These actions can promote *processes of empowerment* (Donati, 2014) of families through the implementation of *integrating dynamics*, starting from the daily interactions which characterise the different dimensions of *living together* in the city (Ambrosini & Bonizzoni, 2012, pp. 219-227; Belletti, Boffi & Ambrosini, 2014, pp. 59-160).

Starting from these considerations and referring to a research project focused on "second generation" parents, the present contribution intends

to focus on the pedagogical aspect of “intercultural mediation strategies” – acted by parents of non-Italian origin with adolescent children – and on the processes of interaction and participation between parents (both native and non-native). It is argued that these issues can indicate possible paths, both of reflection and of action, useful to promote real processes of human inclusion, mutual integration and citizenship in the city.

A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A “PARENTING STYLE” OF INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION IN THE CITY

“Second generation’ parents: ‘guidelines’ for the training of an intercultural parental mediation in the city” is a two-year research project (2016-2018) which assumes as a basic theoretical concept “intercultural mediation”, understood as the “structural dimension” of educational action in plural contexts². It intends to address the issue of migrant families, approaching it from the parents’ perspective³.

Specifically, pursuing a perspective of empowerment of families as protagonists of an “intercultural culture” in the city, the research intends to explore the types of mediation enacted by the parents of adolescents of the so-called “second generations” (Rumbaut, 2004, pp. 1160-1205), residents for at least eight to ten years and with a good level of integration in the territory.

The main aim is to discover if and in which manner parents of “second generation” can represent and become “skilled ferryman” in the educational relationship with their children (Milan, 2012) and “intercultural witnesses” of cohesion, creativity and social participation in the territory.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Bearing in mind these considerations, we intend to make constant reference to the intercultural dimension, which recognizes in the *relationship between* different people – culturally diverse – and in the enhancement of *mutual commonalities* (and not just mutual differences), the pillars of this

² For more information, see Cestaro (2014, pp. 107-110).

³ This is a co-funded research project, promoted by the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, Applied Psychology (FISPPA) of the University of Padua in close collaboration with the Diocese of Padua, Caritas and the Migrant Office of the Diocese of Padua, the “Marco Polo” non-profit association, Intercultural pedagogical center (Mirano-Venice), the Italian Caritas and the Migrants Foundation. The project had the scientific supervision of Prof. Giuseppe Milan and was coordinated by Cestaro as research fellow.

proposal. We believe that fostering real processes of *intercultural integration* of migrant families causes these families to be considered not as distinct and separate categories but rather as *social and educational subjects*. These social and educational subjects are characterized by their own peculiarities but they also share "needs", difficulties, resources, planning and tasks with other "autochthonous" subjects-families.

More specifically, in an intercultural perspective, to conceive interventions (both of pedagogical research and of educational action) that have as their aim the educational approaches adopted by parents of non-Italian origin, in our opinion, implies two major consequences:

- to recognise that such parents share with Italian parents a *common biographical condition*, which can be, as in our case, that of being parents of teenage children;
- to consider parenting (of the father, of the mother, of the couple) as that human condition (Cigoli & Gennari, 2008; Donati, 2013), transversal to different cultures, which allows to highlight those "common traits" defining the educational relationship of parents towards their teenage children.

In this regard, human sciences (sociology, psychology, pedagogy) are in unanimous agreement in considering the function of mediation exercised towards the sons and daughters, born and / or grown up in the new immigration context, as one of the features characterizing migrant parenting.

In order to understand if and in which manner the educational action of the "second generation" parents qualifies as an action of intercultural mediation, we choose here to refer to what we have already been able to define as *the triangle of intercultural mediation* (Cestaro, 2013, Cestaro, 2016, pp. 139-170;) (Figure 1). This triangle is conceived not so much as a "model" but rather as a "map" aimed at guiding the reflection and the action of those who are called to educate today in irreversibly plural contexts.

This peculiar "map" considers human existence as a constant relationship of the subject towards himself, towards others and towards reality (natural, social, cultural, "transcendent"). It intends therefore to visualize the "lines of meaning" in between which pedagogy and education is called to mediate – to "stay in the middle" (Cestaro, 2013). This means to act right along those "frontiers" (the "border places") in which the *relationality* of human existence can unfold in a fully human and humanizing sense

or – otherwise to find limitations or closures that block and encapsulate the individual and the communities within their “small rooms” (Milan, 2008).

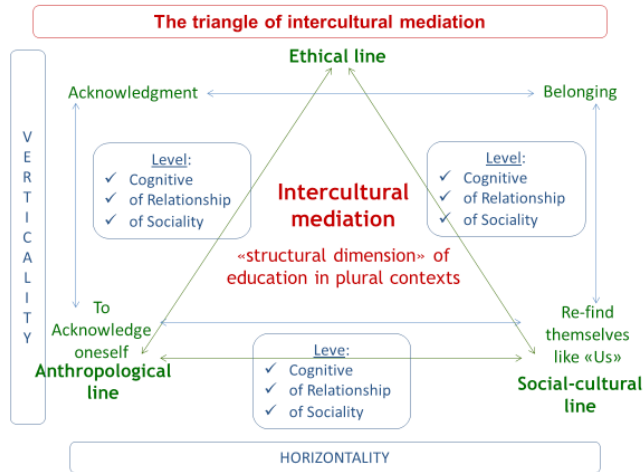


Figure 1: The triangle of intercultural mediation

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research identifies the territory of Padua as a field of investigation and aims to answer the following *main research questions*:

- within the intercultural perspective are there any mediations that characterise the educational action of parents in their relationship with their children? If there any, what are they specifically?
- within the educational relationship what are the main categories of meaning on which the parents' mediation action is based?
- starting from the experience of “second generation” parents, is it possible to recognize any “intercultural mediation strategies” to be promoted among the parents (migrants and non) who live in the city?
- what are the opportunities and resources that the territory can offer to promote, support and enhance the emergence of an “intercultural parenting culture” within the cities?
- is it possible to promote a “parenting network of intercultural mediation” in the city, starting from the empowerment of “second generation” parents?

From a methodological point of view, the research is developed in the epistemological horizon centred on the heuristic meaning of the relationship. So, in adherence to the research questions aforementioned, the project pursues a qualitative-quantitative research approach. Specifically, as part of pedagogical research, it is introduced as "empirical research oriented to decisions" (Baldacci, 2001) and, according to its different development phases, it employs the narrative method and the action research method. Starting from the data collected, the intention is to develop a questionnaire addressed to parents of non-Italian origin and aimed at analysing the possibility of exploring at a national level (Italy) some of the issues of particular interest that emerged from the qualitative analysis.

So, four are *the main phases and research actions* around which the Project is structured:

1. the conduction of *two cycles of focused narrative interviews* (Bichi, 2002, 2007) with parental couples, distributed in the territory of Padua, heterogeneous both for geographical origin and for religion⁴, and resident for at least 8-10 years in Italy and which have a good level of integration in the city (this is based on the quality of relations with the school and / or with other services / socio-educational institutions of the city)⁵;
2. the creation of a "*mixed*" *action research pilot group*, composed of some voluntary socio-educational operators (involved in the parishes of the Diocese of Padua, in the services offered by the local Caritas and Migrantes) and of some "second generation" parents. The pursued aim is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at identifying possible actions to promote, enhance and / or strengthen competences of educational mediation in the resident parents (migrants and not) in the territory through which is possible to act as effective "intercultural witnesses"

⁴ Specifically, eleven couples were interviewed: six from Africa (two from Morocco, one from the Congo, one from Nigeria, one from Tunisia, one from Mauritius), two from the Indian sub-continent (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh), one from Philippines, one from Moldova, one from Uruguay, distributed in the Paduan territory. This was a reasoned sample, identified through the collaboration network activated both among the research partners and among other bodies and / or associations present in the territory. It nevertheless allowed to carry out a number of interviews that allowed the complete saturation of the grid of focused narrative interviews previously elaborated. The collected texts (fully transcribed) were subjected to qualitative analysis employing "paper-pencil" tool.

⁵ The collection of this reasoned sample turned out to be a rather delicate aspect that in fact was carried out during the entire phase of the interviews themselves. One of the main factors that made identifying the sample not simple was the particular type of target and the choice of the age group of the children: the adolescence (13-18 years). The choice of this specific sample was motivated by the same research project design that aimed at creating a relationship of continuity with a previously conducted study on adolescents of the so-called "second generation of immigration" residing in the city of Padua (Milan & Cestaro, 2016).

in the relationship with their teenage children; on the other hand, to promote and support in the city the training of an "intercultural parental network" capable of involving, supporting and accompanying even those migrant families which are characterized by various forms of educational, social and cultural disadvantage;

3. conducting *periodic meetings with Project partners*, conceived as "strategic places" in which, it is possible to monitor and coordinate choices and research actions, starting from the sharing of progressively collected data (this action is transversal to each project phase);
4. the *creation of a questionnaire addressed to parents of non-Italian origin* to be carried out (subsequently) at national level thanks to the collaboration of National Caritas and Migrantes⁶.

The ultimate goal pursued by the project is to help shift attention, often directed at migrant families present in the various Italian cities, from the emergency plan to an *empowerment* plan, based on inclusion and social cohesion as well as participation in local life.

"SECOND GENERATION" PARENTS BETWEEN "TWO CULTURES"

INTERCULTURAL PARENTING MEDIATION

If we consider mediation "an authentically pedagogical word" because "it represents the educational intentionality of transforming a spontaneous relationship into an educational relationship" (Tarozi, 2004, p. 306), we can question ourselves in regards to what are the specificities that distinguish the educational mediation enacted by "second generation" parents and what allows such mediation to be considered as "intercultural".

The data, collected from the focused narrative interviews, allow us to understand first of all how the educational style enacted by the parents interviewed represents a *mediation between their educational history and the way of thinking and communicating of their children, born and / or raised in Italy*. There are therefore two aspects which cover a crucial role in relation to the mediation action of these parents:

⁶ The main thematic areas in which the questionnaire is divided are: the mutual perception of parents and adolescent children; the educational style in which they grew up as children and the educational style enacted today as parents; the meaning of "integration"; the educational implications related to the concepts of religion, religiosity, spirituality, inter-faith dialogue.

- a decisive turn from the "old style" of being parents (the educational style enacted by their parents), who now, living "elsewhere", they judge as a "dictatorship", as a way of assuming an "overly authoritarian" attitude in the relationship with their children. According to them, it is an educational approach that does not facilitate the relationship with children because it forces them only "to obey, to obey", so it is an approach that makes impossible almost every "chance of dialogue" and does not allow parents to know what lives in the mind and in the heart of their children: "how can you know me if we have never talked!"⁷;
- the need to recognize the *otherness* of their children – "their mentality is different from yours" – as well as the peculiarity of the life stage they are going through – adolescence – "difficult age" in which "they hear you, but they do not listen to you". It is a complex age, in which the "question of identity" implies, in the case of their children, having to face in diverse ways the problem of their own "being foreign": "they do not know if they are Italian or foreigners"⁸.

As parents, being able to educate "between" two different models of education, constantly trying to find a "golden mean"⁹ (Aristotle, 2007), directs our interlocutors to adopt personal "strategies of mediation", among which, despite some differences, we highlight some common traits in the following points.

1. First at all, alongside the constant "willingness to comprehend" the culture that is reflected in the way of thinking, acting and communicating of their children, *the intentionality* to enact an *educational decentralization* stands out. It expresses the will to understand the things that their children do, say, ask for (things that are perceived as strange by them) trying to consider these things from the perspective of their children. What is at stake is the effort and the will, as a Filipino mother says, to learn to "dance with the music [of my son] to put your shoe in [his] shoes" to be able to understand that "even for him it is difficult to have Filipino parents". The difficult challenge that these parents face is to put themselves in the shoes of their children without renouncing to their role as parent. The role of a person who is fully aware of *the existential and relational asymmetry* ("I'm a father, I cannot become your friend"¹⁰) that distinguishes therefore oneself from his own children

⁷ D., Congolese mother, of Catholic religion.

⁸ J. e N., Moroccan parents, of Islamic religion.

⁹ The reference is to the Aristotelian concept of *golden mean*, "ethical virtue" which "constantly tends to the medium", to the extent that, being "between excess and defect", "is praised and constitutes righteousness". (Aristotle, 2007, II, 6, 1106b25).

¹⁰ R., Sri Lankan father, of Catholic religion.

without rejecting the responsibility of a "good education", that it is to say offering everything that may allow their children to become adults capable of "thinking autonomously", giving them "the roots and the wings", as a Uruguayan father says. It strikes that the "sense of the roots" that these parents want to transmit to their children lies not so much in the attachment to a "now distant land", or to some specific cultural practices, but rather in a range of human values-principles that they recognize as indispensable in order *to educate to become fully human*¹¹;

2. the second "strategy" that these parents choose to adopt in order to "be in between" "the beauty of our own culture" and the "beauty" of the culture encountered in the new country of residence, in between the demands of the children and the parents' own needs, it is *the dialogic one*. The "dialogue" is in fact recognized by them as a true learning experience in which the availability to listen ("you must approach these guys, you must listen to them") and to learn "to say" and "to let them say" become the means to educate and to educate oneself to reflect, to understand the other's reasons and to choose by experiencing mutual respect and "mutual recognition".

F. – We are in a struggle between two cultures and we find ourselves in a culture where we have lost so many values but there are other values [that are beautiful] because freedom is also a great value that I appreciate so much and this is why I said that I cannot educate my children as I was educated, I have to talk to them, I have to give them the opportunity to say what they want to say and also to say myself what I want to say, I have to dialogue and educate them to responsibility (...) This is something that we have.

R. – Shared...

F. – Shared, we have to speak together, thus this freedom is vital but it must have limits and that each one has to have its own role and level of responsibility, it's something that is being lost in our society, here we try to preserve the beauty of our culture, the positive values, and there are others that are not as positive as those of not having the freedom of expression but an absolute obedience.¹²

¹¹ Among these human principles highlighted by the interviews collected, in particular emerges the sense: of the respect for adults and for every person; of the responsibility towards oneself and of co-responsibility; of sharing and of the solidarity inside and outside the family; of the transcendence; of the freedom and the limit, closely connected with the sense of the "incompletion" proper to the human being as "limited" being; of family and family unity. For more information, see Cestaro (2017).

¹² F. Congolese father, of Catholic religion.

FROM THE IDEA OF “INTEGRATION” TO THE SENSE OF “COMMUNITY”

The need and desire, expressly or indirectly communicated, of “not feeling foreigners” in the new social context, where they have been living for several years, allows us to understand how, in the experience of the parents interviewed, the concept of *integration* mainly implies:

- the intent to being be able to “fit in” – to “become part of” – to learn to know, in addition to the language, also in particular how people mean and do things, “you try to fit it as the people who live here”;
- the commitment to adhere to principles of *honesty* and *legality*, respecting the rules governing the legal, social and economic life of the host country, “we try to respect the rules”;
- the availability to “change”, to “not have a closed-minded mentality” (like that of those who are hiding from what is presented as “new” and “different”) but “curious” to know. The availability to change to which they refer to does not coincide with the attempt to conform to the natives (fit in), but rather with the critical and constructive awareness of those who choose to preserve the “beauty” and the “positive” that they recognize in their culture and that of others, and disregard everything else;
- what is at stake is the constant attempt to find a *harmonious balance between attachment* (“I don’t want to lose those things that I was born”) and *openness* (“If I can do all the dishes in the world, I do them”)¹³.

From the experiences considered it emerges the availability to know and to “mix”. To mix means however not so much to put together different cultural traits in a confused way, as in a patchwork, but rather in the sense of an intentional and responsible “holding and tying together”. Employing the metaphor used by a Moroccan father, who compared the value of cultural variety to the beauty of a “colourful painting”, we can see how, in the experience of these parents, it is precisely the coloured picture contained in the painting that allows to make the meeting and the comparison with the other and its culture an “richness”. The ability of every and each one to draw only one “very colourful” picture requires, however, a reciprocal commitment: “you take something from me and I take [something from you]”.

It is implied a concept of integration identified with the “exchange”, which is made possible only through *situated relationships* – inter-actions

¹³ M., mother of Mauritius, of Hindu religion.

– in the different contexts of common life within the city. In the experience of these parents, the contexts of everyday life can therefore be transformed into “places” or “non-places” (Augé, 2009) of integration according to the quality of the interactions that occur in them.

What emerges from the stories collected, despite some variance, is a *common need and desire for sociability*, to be and do with others, which translates for some even in a concrete commitment to voluntary activities in service of a “community” felt as “his own”. This community is understood as the place of living together and of “mutual acknowledgement” (Ricoeur, 2005). The ultimate aim is to allow everyone, in the respect of each other’s differences and similarities, to *re-find themselves* like “Us” or – as a Moroccan father says – as an “us together”.

An “us” recognized and lived as a “place” of common belonging, which motivates to participate, “to work [with others] for the common good of the city”, to focus on “common interests” and on “problems we have together [and that] we can solve together”.

In other words, to make concrete the possibility of collaborating with others, different for religious affiliation and culture, means to be willing to commit to seek and recognize primarily what unites us rather than what divides us, starting “always [from] the connection points (...) because if you immediately look for what separate us, you do not collaborate”¹⁴.

It is surprising to discover, when listening to these parents, how these “connection points” reflect and respond to *common human and ethical issues*, such as “fraternity”, “brotherhood”, “altruism”, “solidarity”, that find precisely in the respect for the “human person” and in the attention to his basic needs – as well as his inalienable rights-duties – their fulcrum and their driving force.

THE WORK OF THE T-R-A GROUP: BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND CONVERGENCES

The main conceptual issues, emerged from focused narrative interviews on “second generation” parents, were been the subject of sharing and reflection within the pilot “training-research-action group” (T-R-A), composed by some local volunteer workers and by some non-native parents. “Listening” to the point of view of the interviewed parents turned out to be a precious opportunity for the group to make contact with both their

¹⁴ L., Moroccan father, of Islamic religion.

own experience as parents and what each one has had the opportunity to notice about parents (Italian and others) with which usually they come into contact during their own voluntary work.

Here are summarised the key points around which the “mixed” T-R-A group was focused its attention.

- Besides the *experience of loneliness*, expressed by the interviewed parents (especially in the first times after their arrival into the new life context and, in particular, by wives who were brand new mothers), among the T-R-A group parents, it emerges the sense of loneliness expressed by those who say to feel “alone, as a parent” in trying to convey to their children some principles and / or a lifestyle that seem to no longer find a place in the current social context;
- reflecting on the educational approaches enacted by native and non-native parents, the group describes the presence among Italian parents of a sort of “*educational relativism*” as against what they call an *educational plot* interwoven by non-Italian parents. In fact, Italian parents appear to be, mostly, “disoriented” from an educational point of view, incapable of giving to the relationship with their teenage children a “convincing direction”. The absence of a clear and shared educational and ethical orientation leads to notice a sort of “educational anomie”. This lack and / or absence of an “educational norm”, as reference to educate, appears to be the direct consequence of an individualistic and solitary “educational trying to”, a sort of “parental do-it-yourself” lacking, however, of a clear intentionality and educational responsibility. Otherwise, the parents interviewed seem to intentionally maintain from the education received a solid human and ethical orientation around which to build the educational relationship with their adolescent children and on which to found their own *educational awareness as parents*. It is this educational awareness that induce to enact an “education against the flow”. The T-R-A group uses this expression to affirm the intention to propose an educational approach that, by the very fact of establishing “limits and rules” or educating to the sense of respect (towards the parent, towards the adult, towards others) and of responsibility, appears to be in contrast with the prevailing educational approach among the rest of Italian parents. For parents, it is an educational awareness that, in turn, translates into the task and responsibility of offering oneself as a *credible and reliable example* in relation to what one is trying to teach their children;
- in focusing on the lack of common values on which to base the educational relationship with adolescent children, the T-R-A group recognizes the need – and the emergency – of a shared “educational model” around which to build an “educational alliance” among parents (Italian and

non-Italian) and between parents and other adults with whom adolescents have relationships with (teachers, educators, sports coaches ...);

- from the comparison between the perspective of the parents interviewed and their own experience of parents, the group recognizes the existence of *common traits in spite of the mutual cultural differences*. What emerges is the *transversality – transculturality* – of human values that the group recognizes to be crucial because they allow to express “humanity as a primary element that unites”. Specifically, they emerge as “dimensions of values”: respect, responsibility, honesty, testimony, love, participation, sharing and solidarity as well as the ability to listen. These are some of the “pivotal values” recognized by the action research group as important points around which to work to promote a possible “educational convergence” among parents with adolescent children who live together in the city;
- alongside “educational convergences” the group also recognizes the existence of common issues that characterize one’s own and others’ experience as parents of adolescent children. In particular, among these, in addition to the “problem of time” to devote to family life (which always seems little or absent), the problem also emerges of how to communicate effectively with one’s adolescent children. The common challenge – and difficulty – is to know how to build a relationship of listening and dialogue with one’s own teenage children, being able at the same time, to act as *authoritative adults*.

Starting from this reflective practice, the group has therefore “spontaneously” oriented towards a more “operational” phase, aimed at developing a training course, intended for parents (both natives and non) of adolescent children who live in the territory of Padua.

The pursued aim is not to define “how the parent must be”, but rather to promote in each person the ability to take care of himself as an adult and as a parent in order to succeed, in a constructive and intercultural way, to manage the relationship with their teenage children.

The training course, which is intended to be structured according to a workshop method, is intended as a “place” in which every parent is given the opportunity to “learn” from the shared experience within the group. It aims to allow each and every one to recognize the key points that allow to educate one’s adolescent children nowadays in a perspective of “mutual integration”, of inclusion and of social cohesion.

The general program of the training path as well as the calendar and the place of the training course are aspects on which the group is still currently working.

CONCLUSION

The research project (ended in April 2018) allowed us to confirm the basic hypotheses on which the whole research design has been structured as well as to find relevant answers to the first four research questions afore mentioned.

Specifically, the project turned out to be a research work that, starting from the consideration of the perspective of non-native parents, allowed us to reflect on the tasks and the issues of educating as parents of adolescent children within the contemporary multicultural contexts.

In fact, the intercultural mediation strategies enacted by the interviewed parents (among which in particular: the *educational decentralization* ability; the commitment to build a *relationship of dialogue* with the children; the constant search for a *balance between attachment* to the "good" of the one's culture and *openness* to the "good" of the "new" culture; the *testimony*, that is the statement of one's parental responsibility) allowed the T-R-A group to reflect and focus on some key aspects characterising the educational relationship between parents and adolescent children, among which in particular: the relationship between *respect for rules (limits) and freedom*; the parent-child *relational asymmetry*; the importance of finding *educational convergences* on which to build an *educational alliance* between the different adults with whom adolescents have daily relationships.

The recognition of the existence of a "common ground", on which to rediscover themselves as parents despite – and beyond – the reciprocal cultural differences, it was also, for the T-R-A group, a precious opportunity to experience the human "transversality" that allows everyone to include oneself and each other into the same "belonging": *humanity*.

It is indeed humanity understood as a "mediating idea" that allows to find a harmonious balance between "difference" and "equality" because it encourages to recognize how "it's only in the person that plurality rises" (Ricoeur, 1997, pp. 332-325).

The goal pursued by the "mixed" group consists therefore in being able to create "relational places" in which the common experience of being parents of teenage children can become an "integrational learning experience" in which to educate oneself in order to educate to participate with others to the life of the city, experiencing, through inter-action, that *common citizenship* is primarily *human* (Cestaro, 2017).

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.

– But what is the line that supports the bridge? – asked
Kublai Kan.

- The bridge is not supported by this or that stone – answers Marco Polo – but by the line of the arch that they form. Kublai Kan remains silent, reflecting. Then he added:
- Why are you talking to me about the stones? It's only the arch that matters to me.
- Polo responds:
- Without stones there is no arch. (Calvino, 1993, p. 81)

In other words, to promote the development of an educational style of intercultural mediation within the current plural territories exhorts to educate oneself as parents to co-construct relational, human and ethical bridges, capable of transforming mutual differences "into borders that can be mutually crossed" (Cestaro, 2012, 2016). That is, in order to discover those "mutual convergences" that unite each and every one in the common task of educating children to *become intercultural people*.

Finally, we conclude with a clarification. Although the project didn't propose operational practices to promote a "parenting network of intercultural mediation" in the city (fifth research question), we consider that it nevertheless identified a possible "direction to follow". This direction can be identified with the "creation of places" of exchange, interaction and participation, between parents (both Italian and non-Italian), through which to foster that "desire for community" (Bauman, 2003) which encourages each and every one to find creative ways to prevent and / or support possible situations of family, social and / or cultural uneasiness. In fact, this research work leads us to believe that becoming "agents of intercultural mediation", as parents, means to educate "in between" the variety of differences (social, cultural, religious) and, at the same time, to commit to transform these diversities into opportunities for real human proximity and inclusion.

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